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of Mr. Gile's Australian Plants. Three excellent abstracts of German memoirs are given.

Botanische Zeitung, No. 32. Dr. Harz, On the Origin and Properties of Spergulin (a new fluorescent from the seed-coats of *Spergula vulgaris*). Continued from the last number. Reports of Societies. No. 33. B. Ascheron, Phytographic Notes. Christoph Gobi, On Some Phæosporeæ of the Baltic. No. 34. H. G. Holle, On the Point of Growth in the Roots of Dicotyledons. No. 35. A. Morgen, On the Process of Assimilation in germinating Cress (*Lepidium sativum.*) Continued in Nos. 36 and 37. In No. 37 there is a paper by Dr. O. Drude, On the Structure and Systematic Position of the Genus *Carludovica*. The genus is assigned a place between *Pandanaceæ* and *Palmeæ*. No. 38. Dr. O. Drude, Selected Examples to explain the Formation of the Fruit in Palms. Rostafinske, of Cracow, A Reply to Certain Criticisms by Reinke.

ZOÖLOGY.[1]

DESTRUCTION OF BIRDS BY TELEGRAPH WIRES. — Referring to Dr. Coues's article on this subject, in the NATURALIST and elsewhere, I wish to add my testimony to the destruction of much larger birds than any mentioned by this writer. Many prairie chickens (*Cupiaonia cupido*) are annually destroyed in this way. In December, 1868, near Cambridge, Story County, Iowa, I saw many of these birds lying dead on the snow, beneath the line of the telegraph, and was informed by the stage driver that they killed themselves by striking the wire in their rapid flight. Some of the birds had their heads cleanly cut off, and most of them were torn and lacerated to a greater or less extent. One or two of the wounded were still alive and fluttering. The spot seemed to be a favorite one for the flight of the chickens. A high belt of timber skirted the river, and beyond this lay the mile-wide expanse of "Skunk Bottom," bounded by high bluffs on the east. For certain reasons — possibly owing to some peculiarity of the winds at this point, or to the protection afforded by the belt of timber — the birds were accustomed to speed like arrows down across this bottom, and slight contact with the single wire that stretched across would either maim or kill them outright. Since that time I have heard of several instances in which these birds have been killed in the same manner. The destruction of these birds is so general along some of the railroad lines in the West that section men make a regular business of gathering them up as an addition to their own stock of provisions. The telegraph wires may therefore be set down as one of the means — and not an insignificant one — whereby the extermination of the prairie hens is proceeding with a degree of rapidity which would be astonishing had we any means of making even an approximate calculation. — CHARLES ALDRICH, Webster City, Iowa.

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[1] The departments of Ornithology and Mammalogy are conducted by Dr. ELLIOTT COUES, U. S. A.

FOOD OF THE SKUNK. — In his recently published most admirable monograph on the North American Mustelidæ, Dr. Elliott Coues, writing of the "common skunk" (*Mephitis mephiticus*), says, "They feed largely upon insects, birds, eggs, such small reptiles as frogs, small quadrupeds, such as the various kinds of mice," and adds; that "they are also said to capture rabbits in the burrows in which the timorous beasts sometimes take refuge, though they are manifestly incapable of securing these swift-footed animals in the chase." He likewise refers to the well-known fact of their depredations on poultry-yards. Some years ago I shot one of these animals near the celebrated "Walled Lake," in Wright County, Iowa, at the entrance of a burrow where it would seem that they had lived and multiplied and half-hibernated during many generations, for their excrements formed quite a mound around the entrance of their habitation. This refuse was composed almost wholly of the hinder portions of the craw-fish, which swarmed in the sloughs and ponds of the surrounding prairie. The animal matter had of course disappeared in the process of digestion, and the accumulations had bleached out so as to look like a heap of lime, — as it really was, — in every part of which were fragments of the limbs and external parts of these craw-fish of the prairie. The heap was so large that it at once suggested the idea that it must have been deposited by larger animals; but some portions were quite recent, while the hole was too small to admit any of our larger prairie mammals, such as the wolf, fox, or badger Hence I concluded that the craw-fish formed a staple portion of the food of this "*enfant du diable*," as the old French naturalist termed it before science had given it so many names. — CHARLES ALDRICH.

TENACITY OF LIFE SHOWN BY SOME MARINE MOLLUSKS. — In 1875 I collected on several of the Florida keys *Littorina muricata* L. in quantities. This was in February. I brought home quite a number alive and put them in my barn, intending to let the animals die and the shells lose their odoriferous qualities before transferring them to my collection. What was my surprise to find the animals still alive in April, two months after they were collected. They had not been exposed to moisture during the time. The last of them died in May. Again, only last winter, I collected at St. Augustine, Florida, *Littorina irrorata* Say, putting them in tin cans and boxes which in due course of time arrived home. On the first of May last I emptied the shells in a sunny place, and the animals within quickly crawled out. This was four months after I secured them. I have in my collection many Helices that have remained alive shut up in boxes for over three years, — a thing that did not surprise me, as numerous similar instances are on record; but I never before knew marine or semi-marine species to show so much tenacity of life when removed from their natural situations. — W. W. CALKINS.

NOTE ON THE MEXICAN SPERMOPHILUS. — Fresh specimens of this animal (*S. Mexicanus*), still rare in collections, have reached me through Mr. George B. Sennett, of Erie, Pennsylvania, who has lately returned with a fine collection of mammals and birds from the vicinity of Fort Brown, Texas, — a highly interesting locality, which, through the exertions of Dr. J. C. Newell, of the army, and of Mr. Sennett, has furnished various species new to our fauna. In 1857 Professor Baird had some dozen or more specimens to work upon, but no additional ones have hitherto been forthcoming, as Mr. Allen's monograph just published catalogues none. Mr. Sennett's specimens are in fine order, and correspond precisely with Baird's and with Allen's elaborate descriptions. — ELLIOTT COUES, Washington, D. C.

PAPILIO CRESPHONTES IN NEW ENGLAND. — On the 6th of last September, Mr. N. Coleman captured in the vicinity of Berlin, Connecticut, the only specimen of this Southern insect ever recorded from New England. As the larva is not known to feed on any other plant than the orange, the butterfly probably hatched from a larva accidentally transported with trees from Florida, or emerged from a chrysalis sent North as a curiosity.

ANTHROPOLOGY.

EXAMINATIONS OF INDIAN MOUNDS ON ROCK RIVER, AT STERLING, ILLINOIS. — I recently made an examination of a few of the many Indian mounds found on Rock River, about two miles above Sterling, Illinois. The first one opened was an oval mound about twenty feet long, twelve feet wide, and seven feet high. In the interior of this I found a *dolmen* or quadrilateral wall about ten feet long, four feet high, and four and a half feet wide. It had been built of lime-rock from a quarry near by, and was covered with large, flat stones. No mortar or cement had been used. The whole structure rested on the surface of the natural soil, the interior of which had been scooped out to enlarge the chamber. Inside of the dolmen I found the partly decayed remains of eight human skeletons, two very large teeth of an unknown animal, two fossils, one of which is not found in this place, and a plummet. One of the long bones had been splintered; the fragments had united, but there remained large morbid growths of bone (exostosis) in several places. One of the skulls presented a circular opening about the size of a silver dime. This perforation had been made during life, for the edges had commenced to cicatrize.

I later examined three circular mounds, but in them I found no dolmens. The first mound contained three adult human skeletons, a few fragments of the skeleton of a child, the lower maxillary of which indicated it to be about six years old. I also found claws of some carnivorous animal. The surface of the soil had been scooped out, and the bodies